104-10129-10405

SECRET

JFK ACT RELEASE

The Washington Star
5 July 1968

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Washington Star 5 July 68

Strange Episodes Fill Ray Story

CIA HAS NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION AND/OR RELEASE OF CIA INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT

There are strange and interesting elements in the unfolding story of James Earl Ray. It is reported that in London, where extradition proceedings were instituted on the ground that he had murdered Dr. Martin Luther King, he slumped down and sighed "Oh my God, I feel trapped." But Ray's demoralization was only temporary, and it soon transpired that he had hired a prominent Birmingham attorney to go to London, and that said attorney was the very same man who managed the successful defense of those who were accused of killing Mrs. Liuzzo.

Although this is the land of John Birch and Mark Lane and highly inflamed political imaginations, it cannot be imagined by the average American how gleefully Europeans leap to conclusions of Florentine complexity whenever political assassinations are involved. A fortnight ago, Prince Rainier of Monaco asked a visitor whether he had meditated on the first initial of the last name of the three great recent American victims of assassination? — K(ennedy) K(ing) K(ennedy). The visitor confessed that he had not reflected on the three initials' significance, and forebore going on to say that no American who knows anything at all about anything at all would invest any meaning in the coincidental K's.

★

The Ku Klux Klan is as capable of organizing the killing of a President of the United States, the most prominent Negro in the world, and the most prominent liberal politician in the world, as Monaco is of deposing De Gaulle. It is hard for a people whose history is watered with organized connivings for power to imagine individualistic assassination.

★

Having said all of which, there is something about the James Earl Ray case which does suggest that if indeed it was he who fired the shot, that he did not work alone in the tradition of Leon Czolgosz and Lee Harvey Oswald. Too much is known about Ray, and he is more readily imaginable as a hired killer than a lusting fanatic. He has been small-time always.

Moreover, the escape from Memphis suggested the cooperation of at least one ally. Assuming Ray was the assassin, the escape required a kind of cosmopolitan sophistication one does not learn at Midwest penetentiaries. The ample supply of cash isn't particularly surprising, inasmuch as the professional training of James Earl Ray is in acquiring fairly large amounts of cash on short, stick-em up notice. But the exhaustive research necessary, for instance, to appear half-way plausible when applying for foreign passports was more likely supplied by someone other than himself.

Truman Capote ventured early during the mystery that the killer was a paid assassin, and was in all likelihood dead. If the FBI's contentions are validated, then Ray is the killer, and is most certainly not dead, nor will he die, except many years from now—from arteriosclerosis or whatever—Tennessee having abolished the death penalty. But as long as he is alive, he of course jeopardizes his silent partners, and it is supremely in the interest of the state to establish who they are, and to discover what was the motivation for the killing of Dr. King.

If the idea of killing Martin Luther King was that of the KKK, or some local white supremacist group, then in the light of the experience with the Birmingham church, the three civil rights workers in Mississippi, Mrs. Liuzzo and the others—the killing of which consolidated national sentiment in favor of more and more civil rights legislation—then the KKK is even more stupid than it is supposed to be, which is an extraordinary achievement.

★

Such stupidity does not go hand in hand with the supersophisticated provisions made for the assassins escape: does not explain the easy success he had in eluding the greatest manhunt in the history of the world (yes, in the history of the world), until, by committing a foolish mistake of the kind that catches up with the suspect in second-rate detective stories, the accused as good as turned himself in.

Up until now, Ray has kept his mouth shut. And no doubt the Birmingham lawyer will counsel him to continue to do so. But Ray is not the type to suffer in order to sustain the underworld's code. If he is the assassin, he is likelier to crack up when he realizes fully that he is indeed trapped.

NO. | FILE NO. | TYPE | REFERENCE DOCUMENT | PAGE | ANALYSIS OR CHARGEOUT

SECRET (When Filled In)

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL

9 July 68 KW 7-5-68 X